

The current debate over copyright protection, fair use, and consumer rights regarding digital television are not only about whether or not I can make a copy of my favorite Simpsons episode. At risk is the continued freedom of American consumers to make choices about the content they view. Current copyright law protects consumers' fair use rights, allowing them to make archival copies for personal use. This should be allowed to continue, and content providers' warnings that rampant piracy will be the result are unsubstantiated. Worse, they are irrelevant. Just because I can make a perfect digital copy of a broadcast does not mean I will use this copy illegally. I believe most Americans feel the same way. We want to be able to make unrestricted copies of content, to use as we see fit, under existing copyright law. The DCMA, an overbroad and unnecessary piece of legislation, should be repealed, and digital copying should be under the same legal rights and restrictions as any other copying. The types of digital copyright protection that will be implemented are not actually copyright protection, because they go so far as to prevent fair use by consumers. For example, a teacher may want to use a film or television clip to make a point in class. Digital copyright will prevent this. Researchers will face great hurdles and research will be stifled by inability to use portions of "protected" works. The FCC should be very careful giving 'carte blanche' to large corporations when it comes to digital copyrights. At the very least steps should be taken to make sure fair use does not fall by the wayside.